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## **SWEET SUCCESS**

Brenda Reynolds found herself living a typical, modern American lifestyle, juggling career with home life demands that come with having a husband and 4 children. But she somehow found time for a hobby that has since launched into a new, full-time career for her. Brenda's Superior Chocolates, LLC, a retail store that offers homemade chocolate confections, fudge, ice cream, gifts and cards, opened up in downtown Toledo in 2002.

Brenda's entrepreneurial pursuit began in October of 2001, when she began making chocolate reception favors for family and friends on weekends. She would make chocolates in shapes that would match the theme of the party. People fell in love with her creations and encouraged Brenda to pursue turning her hobby into a full-blown business. She liked the idea but was not sure where to start. That's when she turned to the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) for assistance. SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business", is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) that is dedicated to providing entrepreneurs with free, confidential counseling.

Brenda visited SCORE's Toledo Chapter 80 in May of 2002 and received counseling on how to go about starting a business. She worked with SCORE through July of that year, where counselors guided her through the process of building her business plan. Taking her weekend side job and turning it into a full-time business venture was clearly challenging. With SCORE's guidance, Brenda tackled the challenges of locating suitable leased space, finding financing, and building a health department approved kitchen. With business plan in hand, Brenda found a suitable location in downtown Toledo and successfully landed financing for her venture through Sky Bank.

Superior Chocolates, LLC makes fresh products daily for its customers, creating special shapes to match the theme of the event that the customer is hosting. "I wanted to do something that made people feel good," said Ms. Reynolds, "and eating chocolate and ice cream does that".

Getting a business started comes with a set of challenges, but those challenges don't end once the doors are open. "Our greatest challenge has been getting people to come downtown to spend money," states Ms. Reynolds. "We continue to build a word of mouth following by offering a great product at a fair price, and we'll even pay our customer's cost to park downtown."

With help from partners like SCORE and Sky Bank, Superior Chocolates, LLC continues to grow. Brenda recently opened a second location at Westgate Shopping Mall.

Brenda Reynolds has clearly done what most of us dream of doing – turning a weekend hobby into a successful career!